OCT·0 6 2006

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1.   (Previously presented) An image comparison apparatus, comprising:

an object detection sensor for detecting existence of a photograph object;

a camera responsive to said object detection sensor for acquiring a plurality of acquired images prior to the pressing of a check start button and responsive to operation of said check start button for acquiring another at least one acquired image of the photograph object after the pressing of said check start button;

a comparison system for initiating a comparison of said another at least one acquired image with at least one previously memorized registration image, and outputting a first comparison result indicating whether said another at least one acquired image matches said at least one registration image; and

in a case where the first comparison result indicates no match, said comparison system initiates a second comparison of one of the prior acquired images obtained prior to said another at least one acquired image and compares said prior acquired image with said at least one registration image and outputs a second comparison result.

2.   (Currently amended) An image comparison method, comprising the steps of:

detecting the presence of an object to be checked;

capturing a plurality of acquired images of the object;

detecting a press of a check start button;

2

comparing at least one of the plurality of acquired images with at least one registration image;

outputting a first comparison result indicating whether said at least one acquired image matches said at least one registration image; and

repeating said comparing step using another ~~of said~~ acquired ~~image~~ images having been captured prior to said check start button being pressed, if said first comparison result indicates no match, and repeating said comparing step until at least one of said plurality of acquired images matches at least one registration image or until there are no more acquired images for comparison.

Claims 3-16. (Canceled)

17.   (Currently amended) An image comparison apparatus, comprising:

an object detection sensor for detecting a person to be photographed;

a camera for creating at least one photographic image upon detection by said object detection sensor of said person; and

a check start button for causing the camera to create another at least one photographic image of said person after the pressing of said check start button and for beginning a comparison between said another at least one photographic image created after the pressing of said check start button and registration images previously stored by said image comparison apparatus in order to determine whether a match exists and for outputting at least one comparison result, wherein:

a positive result is outputted in a case where there is a created photographic image and registration image pair satisfying a check judgment threshold; and

3

a negative result is outputted in a case where there is a created photographic image and registration image pair that do not satisfy the check judgment threshold; and

where there is a negative result, the comparison apparatus compares <u>one of the</u> ~~a second~~ photographic <u>images of the object</u> ~~image having been~~ created before the pressing of said check start button ~~of the object~~ with said registration images.

18.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 17 further comprising: an image comparison center apparatus for capturing said at least one photographic image created by said camera and comparing it with said registration images previously stored.

19.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 17 further comprising: an illumination device for illuminating a subject to be photographed by said camera.

20.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 17 further comprising: a check count display for displaying a number of times a check operation has been conducted.

21.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 17 further comprising: a check result display for displaying results of whether a match exists.

22.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 17 further comprising: a personal identification keypad for receiving a personal identification code input to be compared with a previously stored personal identification code.

4

23.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 17 further comprising: a card reader for reading a personal code stored on a card, said personal code to be compared with a previously stored personal code.

24.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 2 further comprising:

determining that an image acquired immediately after the check start button is pressed does not match said at least one registration image; and

selecting a second acquired image from said plurality of acquired images for comparison, said second acquired image having been captured prior to said check start button being pressed.

25.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

determining that said second acquired image does not match said at least one registration image; and

selecting a third acquired image from said plurality of acquired images for comparison, said third acquired image having been captured prior to the capture of said second acquired image.

26.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

determining that said second acquired image does not match said at least one registration image; and

comparing a personal identification code received at a personal identification keypad with a previously stored personal identification code to determine whether a match exists.

27.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

5

determining that said second acquired image does not match said at least one registration image; and

comparing a personal identification code read from an identification card with a previously stored personal identification code to determine whether a match exists.

Claim 28. (Canceled)

29.   (Currently amended) An image comparison apparatus, comprising:

an object detection sensor for detecting a person to be taken in an image;

a camera for creating at least one image of said person upon detection by said object detection sensor;

a check start button operable to cause the camera to create another at least one image of said person after said check start button is pressed;

an image comparison center apparatus for initiating a comparison of said at least one acquired image following operation of said check start button with a previously memorized registration image, and outputting a first comparison result including whether said at least one acquired image following operation of said check start button matches said registration image; and

in the case where the first comparison result indicates no match, said image comparison center apparatus initiates a second comparison of [[a]] one of the prior acquired image images obtained prior to operation of said check start button and compares said prior acquired image and said registration image and outputs a second comparison result.

30.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 29, where in the second comparison, said image comparison center apparatus compares said prior acquired image in order of timing beginning near a timing of said check button is pressed.

31.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 29 further comprising:

an illumination device for illuminating a subject to be photographed by said camera.

32.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 29 further comprising:

a check count display for displaying a number of times a check operation has been conducted.

33.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 29 further comprising:

a check result display for displaying results of whether a match exists.

34.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 29 further comprising:

a personal identification keypad for receiving a personal identification code input to be compared with a previously stored personal identification code.

35.   (Previously presented) The image comparison apparatus of claim 29 further comprising:

a card reader for reading a personal code stored on a card, said personal code to be compared with a previously stored personal code.

36.   (Currently amended) An image comparison method, comprising the steps of:

detecting a person to be taken in an image;

creating at least one image of said person upon detection;

pressing a check start button

creating, after the pressing of the check start button, at least one image of said person;

initiating a comparison of said at least one image created after the pressing of said check start button with a previously memorized registration image; and

outputting a first comparison result including whether said at least one acquired image created after the pressing of said check start button matches said registration image,

where in a case where the first comparison result indicates no match, the method further comprises: initiating a second comparison of at least one ~~of the images image~~ created prior to the pressing of said check start button, comparing said at least one ~~of the images image~~ created prior to the pressing of said check start button and said registration image, and outputting a second comparison result.

37.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 36, wherein the second comparison act further comprises the step of:

comparing said at least one image created prior to the pressing of said check start button in the order of timing beginning near a timing of said check start button is pressed.

38.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 36 further comprising the acts of:

determining that said at least one image created prior to the pressing of said check start button does not match said previously memorized registration image; and

comparing a personal identification code received at a personal identification keypad with a previously stored personal identification code to determine whether a match exists.

39.   (Previously presented) The method of claim 36 further comprising the acts of:

determining that said at least one image created prior to the pressing of said check start button does not match said previously memorized registration image; and

comparing a personal identification code read from an identification card with a previously stored personal identification code to determine whether a match exists.

9